



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

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Submitted by: Henry N. Talmage, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, a statewide nonprofit membership organization representing 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.

Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis and members of the Environment Committee,

Testimony in support of:

House Bill No. 5580 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FARM BREWERY MANUFACTURER PERMIT.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports House Bill No. 5580 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FARM BREWERY MANUFACTURER PERMIT. The members of the Connecticut Farm Bureau support the creation of a Farm Brewery Manufacturer Permit similar to the Farm Winery Manufacturer Permit that exists under current law. There is interest in growing crops such as hops, barley and other grains to be used in the brewing of beer by Connecticut farmers. The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station has been conducting field trials and research on hop production over the past few years. We believe that a farm brewery manufacturer permit will help farmers diversify into new crops and allow them to vertically integrate their operations. This will provide further opportunity to grow agri-tourism for our farms and help attract economic activity to rural communities. Connecticut's location within two hours of Boston or New York City present significant challenges and increased costs for Connecticut farmers. That same proximity to population represents a significant customer base loaded with opportunity. The success of the farm winery program has proven the concept and we hope the Environment Committee will embrace the opportunity to add a farm brewery manufacturer permit as well.

The intent of a farm-based permit is that it will be incidental to a farming operation where the ingredients are grown by the farmer / brewer much like the model set in the farm winery permit. Although that is the desired outcome, we recognize there are challenges to ramping up production especially because currently very little of the ingredients used in brewing are being grown in Connecticut. Hops vines take at least three years from planting to become fruitful, and establishing barley growing and malting operations will also take a number of years. Further, we want to allow farmers to produce beer with alternate grains such as oats or wheat as well as other farm products such as fruit, vegetables, or herbs. Finally, we recognize that agriculture is influenced by many factors outside farmers' control, so the permit should be flexible enough to account for bad years where there may be crop failures. Therefore we recommend that the language in Sec.1 (5) be replaced with the following:

(5) The farm brewery permittee shall grow on the premises of the farm brewery or on property under the same ownership and control of said permittee or leased by the backer of a farm brewery an average annual crop equal to not less than twenty-five per cent of the fermentable or non-fermentable farm products used in the manufacture of the farm brewery permittee's beer for the first five 5 years of issuance of any such permit and not less than fifty per cent of the fermentable or non-fermentable farm products for the sixth and any subsequent year of issuance of any such permit. The Commissioner of Consumer Protection in consultation

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with the Department of Agriculture may issue a waiver to the requirements in this subsection after being presented verifiable proof of a crop failure or other temporary factors that would not reasonably allow the permittee to meet the requirements of this subsection.